

Fact Sheet

Wet Dressing



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When are wet dressings used?

Wet dressings can be applied to a child's skin when they are experiencing an acute episode of eczema. This is when the application of moisturisers and topical corticosteroids are not able to control the condition. Wet dressings can be applied to a specific part of the body or the entire body. This can be done in the home for short periods or they can be attended at the hospital.

Wet dressings cover and protect the skin from the damage caused by a child's scratching. The application of cool linen can provide relief from the heat and itching sensation of eczema as the water from the linen evaporates. The wet dressings also help to hydrate the skin and enhance the absorption of moisturisers and topical corticosteroids.

How are wet dressings applied?

1. Preparation of the equipment

Linen and tubifast is cut to the size of each part of the child's body and bandages are collected. Short lengths of tape, about 5cm are cut. A portion of moisturiser ointment is put into a container. A portion of corticosteroid ointment is placed onto a container lid.



2. Bathing

A bath is prepared for the child with lukewarm water and a small amount of bath oil. The child is given a bath and then is gently patted dry.

3. Application of topical corticosteroid

Corticosteroid ointment is carefully applied to the eczema lesions on one part of the body.



4. Application of moisturiser

A generous amount of moisturiser is applied to the part of the body which is being wet dressed.



5. Application of linen

The linen is placed into a bowl containing warm water and a small amount of bath oil. It is then gently wrung out to remove the excess water. The wet linen is placed onto one part of the body.



6. Application of crepe bandages

Crepe bandages are firmly applied over the wet linen, so that the bandage is comfortable and allows a range of movement. The bandage is applied directly over the linen, as the bandage can cause irritation if it rubs the skin. The bandages are held in place with pieces of tape. If a child's hand needs to be wet dressed, the thumb and fingers are wrapped separately.



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7. Application of tubifast

Lengths of tubifast are cut to the size of the part of the body and are put on over the crepe bandage.



8. Application of a wet dressing to a child's face

A wet dressing may be applied to a child's face. A face mask is drawn on paper and adjusted to make sure it is comfortable around the child's eyes, nose and mouth. The paper mask is then used as a template to make a mask of linen. Corticosteroid cream and moisturiser are carefully applied to the child's face. The linen is moisten with warm water, and then wrung out to remove the excess water. The wet linen is placed onto the child's face carefully. The linen is held in place with crepe bandage and tubifast.



Remember: Helpful information to know when applying a wet dressing

- Ask a friend to assist you to apply your child's wet dressing, particularly for the first few times.

- Choose the time to apply a wet dressing carefully, and this is when your child is not feeling hungry, tired, or upset.
- A cotton t-shirt can be used instead of linen when applying a wet dressing to your child's chest.
- Collect a few of your child's favourite toys and games to provide comfort and distraction for your child during the dressing.
- Show your child how they can become involved in the dressing. Your child can help prepare the bandages, or assist you to apply the moisturiser onto their body. Your child can gain a sense of involvement in their treatment by assisting in the dressing.
- If it is a warm day, you can remove the bandages and tubifast, and spray water onto the linen. This can prevent your child from becoming uncomfortable.
- Dress your child with one layer of clothing over a wet dressing on a hot day. For example, a t-shirt and shorts, or a dress. This is to prevent your child from becoming over heated.



Contact Details

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This fact sheet is for education purposes only.
Please consult with your doctor or other health professional
to make sure this information is right for your child.

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the
children's
hospital at Westmead

www.chw.edu.au

